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SELECTION

# ALEXANDER THE GREAT AND HIS WORLD

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PHOENIX
ANCIENT ART

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# ALEXANDER THE GREAT AND HIS WORLD

Alexander the Great: a name that evokes a legendary myth of ancient times. Born Alexander III of Macedon in 356 B.C. in Pella, ancient Macedonia, he was the son of King Philip II and the Epirote princess Olympias. He succeeded his father to the throne at the age of 20 and swiftly demonstrated his conquering spirit. By the age of 30, he had created the largest empire the world had known, stretching from Greece to the banks of the Indus River, and about which he used to say: "the sun never sets".

An outstanding strategist, Alexander the Great is famous for his desire to conquer and for his efforts to establish a political unity between East and West. He died prematurely in 323 B.C., at the young age of 32, leaving behind a rich cultural heritage marked by his determination to bring Greece and the Orient closer together.

The "Hellenistic period" that followed his reign saw political crisis, as a result of his sudden death, together with a flourishing artistic development. Incarnating the victorious conqueror, the figure of Alexander has been an inspiration since Antiquity, and his legend has lasted through the centuries to the present day.

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# CONICAL BOWL WITH A FLOWER-SHAPED GOLD ORNAMENT

Hellenistic (Syria-Palestine), 2nd - 1st century B.C.
Glass and gold
H: 7.5 cm - D: 14.5 cm (1:1)

This bowl (or cup) is outstanding not only for its state of preservation, but also for the thick gold leaf ornament attached to its bottom; this special element makes the piece a unique and probably major bowl in this group of Hellenistic vessels.

It is made of thick transparent glass, olive green in color; the wall is thicker at the upper edge than at the bottom. The shape is as simple as it is elegant; the profile is even and conical, with a rounded bottom, covered with a gold ornament decorated with a flower in relief. The flower is composed of two rings of petals with pointed tips and of a circular central part, which gives the vessel a certain balance (there are no handles). It is worth noting that the bottom of the bowl was specifically sized to receive the ornament; rather than simply rounded, as is the norm for this type of bowl, it shows a projection in the outer profile, as if it had been carved or pressed for a better adhesion of the ornament to the glass (other related bowls occasionally feature more elaborate decorative patterns than a few incised lines, as is the case, for example, with a piece in the University of Missouri-Columbia Collection, whose bottom is fashioned to provide a good balance).
On the inside, the decoration is limited to three horizontal parallel lines, deeply incised and no doubt made with a potter's wheel. The rim is simple, without a lip and slightly rounded. On the outside, about halfway up the wall, a small disk in low relief is probably evidence of ancient repairs, due perhaps to a fusion defect in the glass or to damage.

This piece belongs to a well attested group of glass vases, certainly used as drinking vessels during *symposia* (drinking parties). Produced by workshops based on the Syro-Palestinian coast, approximately between the middle of the 2nd and the late 1st century B.C., these bowls (known as *Syro-Palestinian grooved cups*, because of the inner and/or outer circular engravings) were soon acknowledged in a large part of the Mediterranean world, since they were later uncovered in Greece (Athens, Delos), in Italy (Etruria, Magna Graecia, Sicily), in Spain and in Egypt. Diverse in size and proportions, they were made of transparent, generally colorless amber or, as is the case here, of yellowish green glass.

These glass bowls, which were certainly already regarded as luxury items in ancient times, can be considered as imitations of the many Hellenistic drinking cups made of precious metals (mostly silver), as evidenced not only by the formal affinities, but also by the presence of the rosette on the bottom, a widespread pattern in the decoration of metal tableware.

The manufacturing technique is unique, based on the principle of the mold, but without the pressing operation. After preparing a glass disk of the desired dimensions, the craftsman places it on a plaster or terracotta cone-shaped mold, pointed upwards, and partially fuses it. Under the action of heat and gravity, the glass "melts" over the mold, taking its shape and concentrating especially towards the lip of the vessel, which thus becomes thicker (unlike blown glass vessels, in which the bottom of the vase is thicker). This process (known as *sagging*) is faster and less expensive than the one based on molding in male and female molds; moreover, since only one side of the vessel is in contact with the form, the polishing of the glass can be limited to the inner part only.

## CONDITION

Virtually intact bowl, aside from the partially chipped edge. Iridescent patina in places and remains of encrustations partly covering the inner bowl. Regular traces of polishing on the inside.

## PROVENANCE

Formerly with Sleiman Aboutaam; thence by descent, Noura Aboutaam collection, Geneva, Switzerland.

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GROSE D.F., *The Toledo Museum of Art: Early Ancient Glass*, New York, 1989, pp. 245ff.
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On metal parallels, s.:
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STRONG D.E., *Greek and Roman Gold and Silver Plate*, London, 1966, pp. 108-109ff.

# STATUETTE OF A NUDE DANCER

Hellenistic Greek, 2nd century B.C.
Bronze
H: 8.3 cm

This solid bronze cast statuette is a fine example of Hellenistic realistic art; the craftsman chose to represent an image of daily life that differs a lot from the major mythological scenes or the representations of famous figures that are so widespread in Greek art. The figure represents a street dancer, entirely nude and so astonishingly thin that he looks as though he has a serious illness or disability of the upper chest. He only wears a pointed cap held in place by a metal band, which appears to be decorated with a diadem just above the forehead. An impressive necklace, fastened by a strap, adorns his neck.

Technically and stylistically, this statuette, in spite of its reduced size, is depicted with a remarkable precision and accuracy, both in the observation and in the rendering of the movements and anatomical details. The dramatic, unnatural position of the figure probably results from the energetic and flowing movements of the dance. He looks totally focused on the rhythm of the movements and indifferent to his surroundings. The legs are bent and crossed, and the tips of his feet only would have touched the ground. The torso is bent forward, the shoulders and the head are slightly turned to the right. In the frenzy of the dance, his enormous genitals are caught between his legs.

The age of the man cannot be easily determined, but the large, smooth forehead and the facial features suggest that he is rather elderly.

He is a hunchback with a large deformity of the chest, which has a huge circumference. Perhaps he suffered from rickets in his youth. In their remarks on such pathologies in ancient art, M.D. Grmek and D. Gourevitch have noted that their frequency in the Hellenistic minor arts is well above average compared to the number of people who were actually afflicted with these deformities. The two authors explain this phenomenon through the apotropaic significance and good luck associated with sufferers of such handicaps.

Typologically, this piece belongs to a group of very homogeneous bronze figurines whose artistic quality may vary. They are generally dated to the Hellenistic period and often attributed to the Alexandrian school.

## CONDITION

Arms and lower legs now lost. Reddish brown surface of the bronze partially covered with a green and black patina.

## PROVENANCE

Ex-Austrian private collection, acquired in 1992; acquired on the German art market in 2007.

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On chest and spine deformities:
GRMEK M. D. - GOUREVITCH D., *Les maladies dans l'art antique*, Paris, 1998, pp. 199-219.

# STATUETTE OF HERACLES WITH THE APPLES OF THE HESPERIDES

Roman, 1st century A.D.
Bronze
H: 29 cm

The figure represents Heracles, the archetypal Greek hero: he is standing upright, the weight of his body supported by his left leg, while the right leg is a bit behind (only the tip of the right foot touches the ground). The right arm followed his body and certainly held an attribute, like the club or the bow. The left arm is bent and directed towards the viewer: in his hand, Heracles holds three spherical objects, which can be identified as the Apples of the Hesperides. Bringing these fruits back, with the long journey to Mount Atlas, was the last of the twelve Labors of the hero.

Here, the head and face of Heracles refer to the usual models of the hero, depicted as a middle-aged male. His hair is short and styled in small wavy locks, his beard is short but thick and a mustache covers his upper lip. His severe, idealized face conveys a deep sense of self-consciousness and confidence.

Stylistically and artistically, this statuette, which can be dated to the early Imperial period, probably to the 1st century A.D., is of the highest quality: the proportions, as well as the natural position and the meticulously rendered anatomical details of the figure, can be compared to the most beautiful bronze figures of the time.

Typologically, this statuette belongs to the numerous variations created by the Roman artists, who were certainly influenced by the Classical or Hellenistic Greek images of Heracles showing the hero standing upright, but in a moment of repose. Despite small differences (attributes, positions of the legs, of the arms, of the head, etc.), the attitude is similar to that of the Chiaramonti Heracles of Boston/Oxford or New York, which are Roman copies after Greek originals. This type still appears in the 3rd century, for example on the sarcophagi representing the Labors of Heracles.

## CONDITION

Perfectly preserved; right arm lost, feet and lower left leg reassembled; eyes inlaid but lost. Statuette mounted on hollow pedestal in the shape of a molded drum, probably the original base. Brown-colored surface with minor traces of green patina in light relief. Perhaps because of the restorations, the statuette leans backwards.

## PROVENANCE

Ex-English private collection (London), collected before 1982; ex-Japanese private collection, acquired in 1982.

## PUBLISHED

*Phoenix Ancient Art 2012 n. 1*, Geneva-New York, 2012, n. 23.

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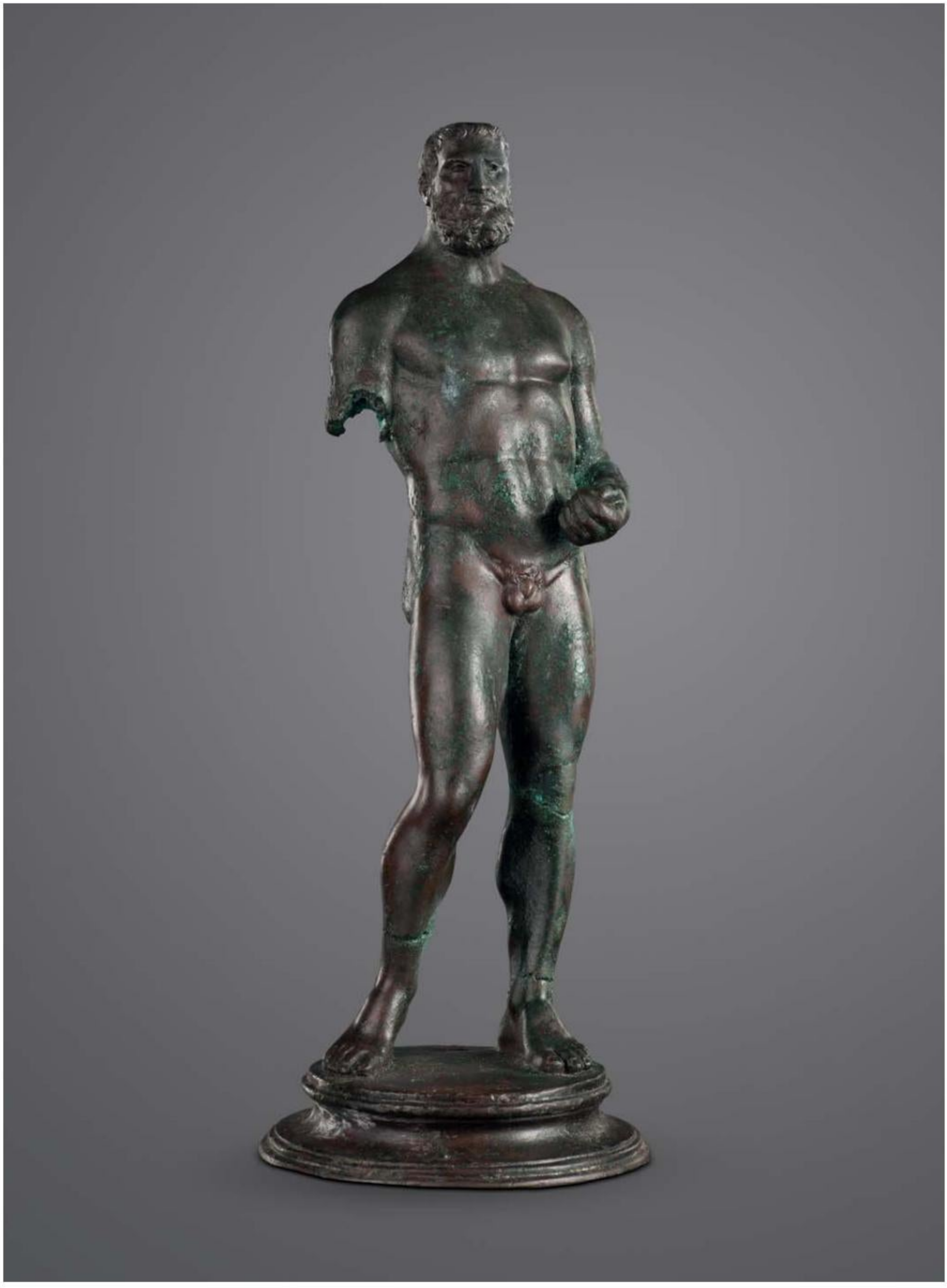

# KYLIX WITH THE REPRESENTATION OF A HORSEMAN

Greek (Thrace), late 5th century B.C.
Gilded silver
D: 19.3 cm (with handles)

The incredible thinness of the walls and the perfect profile indicate that the cup was molded and wheel made rather that hammered. The low, curvy body has a ridge halfway up the side of the vessel that separates the hemispheric profile from the bottom of the cup; the flared rim possesses a rounded lip; the bowl is supported by a low ring foot. The handles, which are circular in cross section, are soldered at the level of the ridge; in spite of their size, they do not pass the height of the lip. Their placement on the body follows and accentuates the horizontal axis marked by the horseman's movement too the right.

Typologically, the same type of cup is seen in Attic black glaze ceramics from the 5th century B.C. along with all of the different variations in proportion, size, size of the handles, etc.

On the interior at the exact center of the vessel, one sees the impression of the tool used to make the cup and especially to execute the decorated medallion: all o the motifs were very finely incised and then leaf gilded. In spite of the image's miniature size, the precision of the work is remarkable and rivals that of the finest metal vessels known.

A garland of leaves, knotted above and below, and a circle ornamented with dots border the tondo, which presents a bearded horseman. The young and well groomed man is depicted in the prime of his life with perfectly developed musculature. His anatomy, which consists of his head, arms, hands, leg and foot, are perfectly detailed and drawn: even if one looks only at the classical profile of the face, one observes the short trim beard and the eyes seen in profile and detailed with lashes and brows! The man urges his horse to a gallop and grasps the reins in his left hand while the right is armed with a long lance. He wears a short, very finely pleated linen chiton while a belt cinches his waist. A thick cloak with a triangular motif embroidered onto the fabric is clasped at the neck with a circular fibula; the cloak billows out behind him thanks to the wind created by the galloping horse. The warrior wears a pointed leather bonnet on his head with cheekpieces; a finely chiselled metal skullcap covers the crown of the head.

The horse, rearing slightly, plants his hind legs on a sandy ground strewn with flowers. Like on the horseman, all of the animal's details (cf. musculature, position as well as harnessing) were incised in a perfectly natural fashion that corresponds with the typology of Greek representations from the 5th and 4th centuries B.C.

The lack of precise attributes prevents positive identification of the man as a known mythological figure: he is probably a man from the cavalry class, one of the higher classes of Athenian society.

The outfit that he wears matches traditional Thracian garb, consisting of a foxskin bonnet, the *alopekis*, and of the cloak of the cavalry, the *zeira*. The look is completed by supple leather boots *(embades)* and by the *pelta* (a wooden shield shaped like a crescent moon). In Attic iconography, this costume appears toward the end of the 6th century and continues through the following century. This is most often explained in relation to two known historical facts: the hiring of troops of Thracian mercenaries by the tyrant Peisistratus and the return of Miltiades the Younger to Athens after his prolonged stay in Thrace.

The people who dressed in this manner were not only Thracian soldiers (who were most often footsoldiers or fully armed cavalry) but also Athenian nobles who chose to adorn themselves in exotic fashions: among the best examples of this type of dressing is the horseman in the tondo of a cup by the Foundry Painter (ca. 480 B.C.) and especially some of the horsemen sculpted on the Parthenon frieze, whose Athenian origins are without doubt. One can mention in particular a group from the Western Frieze (plaque IV, 8), whose image is an almost perfect match with the horseman on this cup, as if the craftsman had copied the Athenian temple relief.

If the artistic quality of this cup is of the same level as that of the best red figure *kylikes* and can be compared with the great sculptural groups, then the use of two precious metals such as silver and gold mark this as an extraordinary object. It possesses only a small number of parallels among ancient jewellery form what is essentially Northern Greece (Thrace, colonies on the Black Sea): in this case, on can imagine the pride of the dignitaries or the Thracian military leaders (people whom the Greeks saw as barbarians), who were sufficiently wealthy enough to acquire a piece of goldwork of such great value, on which an Athenian noble is depicted dressed in a Thracian fashion.

## CONDITION

This cup is in remarkable state of preservation: with the exception of some cuts at the edge, it is practically intact.

## PROVENANCE

Ex-Swiss private collection; American private collection, acquired in 1996.

## PUBLISHED

HORNBOSTEL W., *Sarapis. Studien zur Ueberlieferungsgeschichte, den Erscheinungsformen und Wandlungen der Gestalt eines Gottes*, Leiden, 1973, p. 277, note 5, no. 227, pl. 171.

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# UPPER PART OF A RHYTON

Egyptian, Ptolemaic Period (late 3rd – 2nd century B.C.)
Light and dark blue faience
H: 18.5 cm (1:1)

Only the upper part of the rhyton, modeled in very thin faience, is preserved: cylindrical in shape, it tapers in the lower part, which was completed by the neck. The body of the vessel displays a decoration in high relief (the figures were modeled separately and then applied to the smooth surface of the support), which is divided into three stacked friezes whose height decreases from the bottom. Each frieze is framed by a thin cornice, below which a decorative band is finely incised with several figures. The storage conditions no longer enable us to precisely identify the scenes, but one can discern draped, and sometimes winged, figures running or dancing, standing out against the background highlighted in blue. The upper frieze is composed of winged, chubby infants (the *Erotes*). They seem to perform a lively dance, while playing the zither and the double flute; they are naked or wrapped in their cloak.

The central frieze depicts a Greek banquet: each couch, provided with molded feet, includes a cushion, and a plain or pleated drapery adorned with a checkerboard pattern. Six guests, with a crown on their head, recline on five couches: *a*) a man talking to a woman, his arm around her shoulder, while she sits on the edge of the couch. Her cloak slipped from her shoulders to her hips; *b*) a man raising a rhyton and turning to the left, so as to discuss with *c*) the woman of the neighboring couch, holding a cup; her hairstyle is particular, since it is a "Nubian" wig with large locks; *d*) a guest raising his right arm, accompanied by a monkey visible between the folds of his cloak; *e*) the last guest would be a musician, since a zither is suspended behind him in the background.

The last frieze, in the lower part, features three most unusual and enigmatic scenes: *a*) a rider defeats a nude opponent, whose oval shield lies on the ground; raising his arm, the man begs for mercy. The rider is dressed in a Greek breastplate, but wears the Egyptian *nemes* and an *atef* crown; the weapon he brandishes is neither a spear nor a sword, but a bundle of lightning, that is Zeus thunderbolt; *b*) further away, a woman wearing an Attic helmet, and armed with a round shield and a long-handled ax, walks towards a lion, which stands on its hind legs and is already attacked by a dog. The woman wears a short tunic that reveals one of her breasts; *c*) behind the lion appears a war chariot with two horses at full gallop, led by a winged figure who can be identified as Nike, the Greek personification of Victory.

This support is probably unique and its interpretation remains enigmatic. Although the style and iconography are confidently Greek, the material - faience - refers to Egypt, where it was often used. Other elements refer to Egypt and its millennial culture, such as the "Nubian" hairstyle of the female guest, the small monkey and, especially, the *nemes* and the *atef* crown of the rider. Chronologically, this objet can therefore be dated to the Ptolemaic period, between the late 3rd and the 2nd century B.C.

In this context, the rider would be identified with a pharaoh (Alexander himself or a Ptolemy). As a hypothesis, one would imagine that this support commemorated the victory of Arsinoe III and Ptolemy IV against the Seleucid troops in 217 B.C., at Raphia, which would justify the presence of Nike on her chariot. The iconography of the pharaoh (Ptolemy IV here) would imitate the old Egyptian tradition of representing the king defeating his enemy, like Horus defeating Seth, but armed with the thunderbolt. The female figure attacking the lion would be an Artemis/Isis, who would glorify the military talents of Arsinoe III, present on the battlefield of Raphia.

Generally speaking, the decorative profusion and high quality of the workmanship are the striking features of this object, and make it a prized, luxury item, which was probably used at official banquets or offered as an ex-voto in a large shrine.

## CONDITION

Incomplete and reglued, but the scenes in relief are clearly visible; traces of light and dark blue glaze still partially preserved (especially on the miniature friezes).

## PROVENANCE

Acquired in Germany in 2001.

## PUBLISHED

*Faïences, Phoenix Ancient Art*, Geneva-New York, 2011, no. 90.
NENNA M.-D., *Bibliographie commentée des contributions sur la faïence gréco-romaine 2000-2013*, in EMPEREUR J.-Y., *Alexandrina 4, En l'honneur de Mervat Seif El-Din*, Alexandrie 2014, pp. 356-357, fig. 7a-b.

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# HEAD OF THE GOD SERAPIS

Roman (Egypt), 1st century A.D.
Lapis lazuli
H: 9.4 cm

This work is outstanding both for its monumentality (which is not diminished by the miniature size) and for the rendering of the lapis lazuli, whose detail and remarkable precision suggest glyptic art.

Ancient Egyptians strongly believed that lapis lazuli had spiritual powers: with its dark blue color embellished with golden dots, this semi-precious stone recalled the heavens - hence representing the universe -, and the primeval waters of chaos. According to myth, the hair of the gods was made of precious lapis lazuli. The royal regalia were made of gold and lapis lazuli, so as to place Pharaoh under the protection of the sun and sky.

The back of the head (including the crown) is flat and smooth: originally, this head did therefore not belong to a statuette, but would have been part of a very high relief representing a man characterized by an abundant hair and a thick beard framing his face. He wears a modius (kalathos), a high cylindrical headdress adorned with a plant wreath. On the face, the artist deeply carved the locks that fall on the forehead and the long vertical grooves that delineate the cheeks, while the mustache and especially the beard form a compact mass, crossed from top to bottom by vertical, regular incisions that indicate the locks. The face, which conveys a severe and distant expression, is that of an adult man in the prime of life, provided with well-structured features: the eyebrows are in relief, the eyes are globular (the iris and pupil are lightly engraved) and the cheekbones are prominent and finely shaped.

According to W. Hornbostel, who published this image in 1973, the style of the head suggests that it was produced in a Roman workshop.

This figure can certainly be identified with the Graeco-Egyptian god Serapis, introduced in the late 4th century B.C. by Ptolemy I, the first pharaoh of the Lagid dynasty, in order to establish a patron god for the city of Alexandria. Accepted by the Egyptian world, this deity also brought together the Greeks, newly arrived in Egypt, and the natives. A "synchretic" god, Serapis is a synthesis of several figures of the Egyptian pantheon (Osiris and Apis) and of the Greek pantheon (Zeus, Hades, Asklepios), which enabled him to please many faithful and to be widely worshipped: Serapis was a god of fertility and abundance, closely linked to the chthonic world, but he also healed the disabled and predicted the future. Iconographically, he can be closely related to the Greek god Pluto, with his thick beard and abundant hair, seated on a throne or standing upright, dressed in a chiton and a himation. His most common attribute is the cylindrical headgear, a symbol of the fertility of the land, sometimes coupled with the cornucopia in his left hand.

As from the Hellenistic Greek period, Serapis was very popular, even replacing Osiris. His chief center of worship was Alexandria, but he was also revered at Memphis. His cult was a sweeping success in the ancient world and spread all throughout the Mediterranean basin.

## CONDITION

Very good condition. The head is broken at the neck, fragments were reglued and restored (lower part, tip of nose, left cheek especially). Chips.

## PROVENANCE

Ex-German private collection, 1950-1960s.

## PUBLISHED

HORNBOSTEL W., *Sarapis. Studien zur Ueberlieferungsgeschichte, den Erscheinungsformen und Wandlungen der Gestalt eines Gottes*, Leiden, 1973, p. 277, note 5, no. 227, pl. 171.

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VERMEULE C.C., *Greek and Roman Sculpture in America*, Malibu, 1981, p, 217, no. 182.

# PORTRAIT OF ANTIOCHUS III THE GREAT

Hellenistic Greek, late 3rd - early 2nd century B.C.
Marble
H: 33.7 cm

This piece belonged to a composite statue, of which only the front part of the head and neck were carved from this block of marble.

The back and bottom parts are cut straight, and their surface is smooth and even : the deep rectangular notch carved in the posterior part of the back would serve to attach the head to the rest of the image, the nature of which is still unknown. The hair, unfinished beyond the circlet, might have been made of plaster or covered with a veil, held by a circle or another metallic element, affixed to the furrow which is visible above the forehead. The portrait, of remarkable artistic quality, represents an elderly man whose severe and self-confident expression betrays the habit of command. His gaze is directed straight forward, but the rendering of the neck muscles indicates that his head was slightly turned to the left. His face shows strongly marked features that the artist has indicated plastically, or by alternating hollow or slightly relieved surfaces: this creates the chiaroscuro effect which is a major characteristic of the head. The strong personality of the man and his individuality are also emphasized by the differentiation of the left and right sides of the face.

The dimension of the head, a bit larger than life size, and the presence of the ribbon around the upper forehead are important elements to admit that the figure represented is of royal rank. The identification of this figure with the Seleucid king Antiochus III, although hypothetical, is made probable by the comparison of the head with an individual portrait at the Louvre, that the archaeological community almost unanimously attributes to this sovereign. Even if they are not identical, both heads show the same characteristics: the strong and elongated face, with the clearly marked jaw and the large, straight chin, the severe expression, the high and balding forehead, the deeply-set eyes, the prominent cheekbones, the very short hair arranged in small locks, the ribbon encircling the head. Like the image of the Louvre, this head would possibly be a copy from the Roman period.

The coinage portraits of this prince, such as they appear on the latest emissions (after 200 B.C.), confirm this hypothesis. At nineteen years of age only, Antiochus the 3rd became the ruler of the Seleucid empire in 219 B.C. During his long reign (thirty-six years), alternately glorious and dramatic, he was able to restore the Seleucid power not only in Asia Minor (victory on Achaios in 215), but also all throughout the East, as it was known at the time, since he led his army in a series of expeditions that recall the exploits of Alexander the Great, accomplished just a century earlier: between 212 and 205, Antiochus III annexed Armenia, Parthia, Bactria, the Paropamisadae (Hindu Kush), before returning, just like Alexander, through Arachosia and Drangiana, at the mouth of the Tigris. He then became sole ruler of Syria in 198 (Fifth Syrian War).

But at the end of the day, the strength of the Seleucid kingdom was less effective than impressive. Indeed, against the Roman power, the collapse of Antiochus III empire was quick and irrevocable: alarmed by the intervention of the Syrian king in Thrace, Rome declared war to him in 192. Beaten by Scipios, he gave them Asia Minor up to the Taurus (Treaty of Apamea, 188).

Antiochus III, called The Great for his military feats, died in 187 after an ambush in Susa where he had just plundered a temple.

## CONDITION

Except for the nose, which is broken, and for minor chips, the portrait is complete and in a remarkable state of preservation.

## PROVENANCE

Ex-European collection, acquired in the 1970s.

## PUBLISHED

HORNBOSTEL W., *Sarapis. Studien zur Ueberlieferungsgeschichte, den Erscheinungsformen und Wandlungen der Gestalt eines Gottes*, Leiden, 1973, p. 277, note 5, no. 227, pl. 171.

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RICHTER G.M.A., *The Portraits of the Greeks*, vol. 3, London, 1965, pp. 270-271,

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# HEAD OF SERAPIS-AMMON

Roman, 2nd century A.D.
Marble
H: 29.2 cm

Male head carved from a fine-grained marble, whose near translucence is visible in the polished areas of the face, especially the forehead and the cheeks. The hair is composed of very thick curls, made by using a drill. Substantial traces of paint prove the pictorial dimension of the original sculpture. Indeed, both the hair and the headgear have a pinkish hue.

This head is characterized by thick hair and by a bushy beard framing the face. The abundant locks form compact shells and are each marked by one or more deep holes. The mustache and the beard are likewise composed of extremely dense and compact curly hair, marked by deeply engraved furrows.
A high cylindrical headdress, known as a *modius*, covers the crown. Flat-topped, it has a prominent upper brim. A plant with fruit (no doubt an olive branch, a symbol of the fertility of the land) is represented vertically and occupies the front of the *modius*.

The wide almond-shaped eyes are surmounted by heavy eyelids; each eye shows an iris delineated by a circular incision. The eyebrows are strongly marked and run towards the finely modeled nose, whose tip is damaged. The nose is perfectly shaped and the parallel nostrils are clearly visible. It is also worth noting the presence of two fragmentary elements that would form horns, placed on each side of the head, in the hair.

The various characteristics of this carved head enable us to confidently identify it as a representation of the Greco-Egyptian god Serapis-Ammon. While the head presents the original iconography of the god, the general treatment of the facial features (hair, beard, cheeks) allows us to date it to the Antonine period of the 2nd century A.D.
A "syncretic" god, Serapis is a synthesis of several figures of the Egyptian pantheon (Osiris-Apis, the god of fertility embodied in the shape of a bull) and of the Greek pantheon (Zeus, the supreme god, or Hades, the god of the underworld). Serapis was introduced in the late 4th century B.C. by Ptolemy I, the first pharaoh of the Lagid dynasty, in order certainly to be accepted by the Egyptian world and, at the same time, to bring together the Greeks, newly arrived in Egypt, and the natives. Serapis was therefore a god of fertility and abundance, closely related to the chthonic world, but he also healed the disabled and predicted the future, which enabled him to please many believers and to be appreciated by everyone.
Iconographically, he is depicted much like the Greek god Hades, with a bushy beard and thick hair, seated on a throne or standing upright, wearing a *chiton* and a *himation*. Personifying the fertility of the land, Serapis sometimes holds a cornucopia in his left hand. As in our example, his most common attribute is the *modius*, a headdress in the shape of a *kalathos*, or basket, which was a standardized measure for wheat grain and therefore a symbol of the underworld. In turn, the horns would refer to the images of the god in his syncretic form, coupled with the Egyptian god Amun. Among the major deities of the Egyptian pantheon, Amun was sometimes represented in the shape of a ram with large curved horns.

As from the Hellenistic Greek period, Serapis was very popular, replacing Osiris. His chief center of worship was at Alexandria, but he was also honored at Memphis. His cult was a sweeping success in the ancient world and he became a god revered all around the Mediterranean Sea.

## CONDITION

Head in excellent condition; clean oblique break at the neck; tip of the nose broken, horns incomplete, upper edge of the *modius* chipped; minor concretions.

## PROVENANCE

Ex-Georges and Ludmilla Anghelopoulo Collection, Beirut, Paris, and Kitzbühel; acquired from Elie Boustros in Beirut before 1948.

## PUBLISHED

HORNBOSTEL W., *Sarapis. Studien zur Ueberlieferungsgeschichte, den Erscheinungsformen und Wandlungen der Gestalt eines Gottes*, Leiden, 1973, p. 277, note 5, no. 227, pl. 171.

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*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (LIMC)*, Vol. I, Zurich-Munich, 1981, *s.v. Ammon*: pp. 666-689, more specifically F. *Rapports avec d'autres divinités*, c. *Ammon et Sarapis*, nos. 141-152.
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For similar examples:
HORNBOSTEL W., *Sarapis. Studien zur Ueberlieferungsgeschichte, den Erscheinungsformen und Wandlungen der Gestalt eines Gottes*, Leiden, 1973, fig. 117, 123, 125,198 (for example).

# BUST OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Roman Imperial, 1st century A.D.
Black marble
H: 42 cm

Many portraits of Alexander the Great created after his lifetime, like this splendid example, tended to follow the models created by his appointed court sculptor, Lysippos. Features of the grey marble head, such as the slight turn of the head, prominent brow, accentuated and deep set eyes, and long, thick locks of leonine hair, are all hallmarks of Alexander's image. The characteristic "anastole," the form of upswept central curls above the forehead, is also a typical feature of Alexander's portraits. The slightly parted lips, full and bow-shaped, lend an almost sensuous nature to the portrait. The heavy brow creates a shadow over the eyes that intensify his expression and the psychological power of his image. His captivating gaze is engaging, and at the same time, otherworldly and ethereal. This also relates the sculpture to the work of Lysippos, who is known to have given portraits of Alexander a sharp and penetrating look. Suitable to his role as king, Alexander was depicted with a regal aura, and the rendering of his full, massive locks of hair portrays the ruler as virile as well as leonine, an aspect of Alexander that is well attested by ancient texts.

As with later images of Alexander created after his death in 323 B.C., the piece shows the influence of his idealized image. The cult of Alexander as king spread throughout Hellenistic kingdoms as a means of consolidating newly conquered lands under the administration of his generals. Images of Alexander came to represent the concept of kingship throughout the Hellenistic period, and their prominent display was meant to assist the successors of Alexander with the appropriation of his heritage. The deified Alexander is ever young, the glorifying context of the image is apparent as Alexander surpassed the gods and the heroes themselves not telling about the kings. Considering the extensive posthumous cult of Alexander the god, commemorative monuments with his sculptures would be found across the whole Hellenistic world. The characteristic features of the type preserved in our head are also found in the head of the later statue of Alexander dated to the Hadrianic time and found in the theatre of Perge (Antalya, Archaeological Museum).

This custom continued, particularly in the Roman Imperial period, a time during which emperors drew parallels between themselves and selected gods and heroes of the Greek world. Noted as a mortal being that became a hero and subsequently a god, the image of Alexander the Great was perfectly suited to serve in this role.

It is not known whether the original ancient location of this piece was in the public space of an official structure, such as a temple, library, or administrative center. Wealthy and cultivated Romans would engage the topic of the power of Alexander's notable personality, his superhuman accomplishments and the human fate with their philosophical discourses; it would not be surprising to find his image in the intimacy of a domestic setting, like the atrium or garden of a private villa.

The famous Villa dei Papiri in Herculaneum contained the whole collection of several bronze busts representing the Hellenistic rulers, Greek poets and philosophers, that serves an eloquent example of the cultural preferences of the Roman elite. The busts made parts of the herms, they fit into the marble pillars. The present head was used in exactly the same way, as it is suggested by the rounded shape of the cut in the lower part of the neck and the chest. It would be probably not sufficient to say that the color of the stone suggests the appearance of the bronze. Early Imperial time is particularly famous for the appreciation of the chromatic and pictorial values of stones, the fashion that arrived in Rome following conquer of the Hellenistic Egypt. The workmanship of this head reflects the Egyptian taste for the combination of contrasting rough and smooth surfaces, and the color of the grey marble is similar to certain hard stones, such as basalt or basanite, of which the portraits of pharaohs and the statues of gods have been previously executed, and the portraits of the first conquerors, Julius Caesar or Marcus Antony, were sculptured in Egypt in the 1st century B.C. This unique portrait of Alexander the Great in color stone belongs to the same great tradition. As the most significant quarries in Egypt fall under imperial jurisdiction with the reign of Augustus, the commission of the head would come from a person of a very important and high social rank.

## PROVENANCE

Ex-Dr. L. Collection, Switzerland, ca. 1950; Ex-Florent Dalcq (1878-1950) collection, Belgium, acquired in the 1930s in Brussels with the assistance of the architect Baron Victor Horta.

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MORENO P., L'*imagine di Alessandro nella "maniera" classica (323-301 a.C.)* in *Alessandro Magno: Storia e Mito, Fondazione Memmo*, Milano, 1995, pp. 207-208.

# CUP WITH AN ACANTHUS LEAF PATTERN

Hellenistic, late 3rd - 2nd century B.C.
Gilded silver
H: 7.9 cm - D: 25.8 cm

It was made from a somewhat thick, single piece that would have been cast and finished on a wooden or stone core, rather than worked by hammering a sheet of metal. The finishing touches (chiseling, polishing, gilding) were subsequently cold-worked. On the outside, the incisions formed by the decorative motifs can be seen in negative. All the inner and outer decorated parts are highlighted by the gilding.

The cup, much larger in size than average, is wide and rather low with a regular, linear profile, while the edge is simply rounded. This shape recalls the Greek *phialai*, but it has neither shoulder nor lip.

The main decorative pattern is on the inside. Outside the central tondo, a first rim of five large acanthus leaves rises from a golden circle; the toreut perfectly organized the available area, since the left corner of each leaf overlaps with the right corner of the previous leaf and hides it. A second series of leaves, which are narrower but encompass a more embossed profile, appears in the background, alternating with those of the main row. This special arrangement of acanthus leaves recalls the bell of a Corinthian capital and creates a remarkable trompe l'oeil effect, since the observer stands exactly in the place of the shaft of the column.

Each leaf's veins are beautifully rendered by a vertical central incision, from which radiate slightly curved lines indicating the lateral nervures, whilst small dots mark the roughness of the plant's surface. The outline of the leaves are dentate.

A golden line with a row of small incised circles frame the central medallion. Near the lip is a garland composed of three different patterns (horizontal acanthus leaves, interlaced design, plant wreath), repeated four times; at the same height, but on the outside, there is another frieze displaying a motif of crossed crescent moons (interlacing).

This form of cup certainly has a Near Eastern origin, but it was very popular during the Hellenistic period in many parts of the ancient world. Related examples are found in Magna Graecia, Greece, Egypt, Near East, Iran and even in Bactria. Examples all over the Western world generally have a smaller diameter and are mostly deeper than their lower, wider counterparts manufactured in the East, which are perfectly exemplified by our work.

The presence of a large tondo, often in more or less thick relief, and inlaid, is another distinctive feature of Western cups (New York collection, from Magna Graecia).

The serrations of the acanthus leaves are usually of the pointed type in the Hellenic world, but rounded in the Near East (acanthus known as "Seleucid"). The intermediate type, which can be related to that of this medallion, also exists in architecture (Corinthian capitals from the 2nd century B.C. excavated at Ai Khanum, in ancient Bactria). The gilded central motifs with several wreaths composed only of acanthus are rare, but they are documented on other Eastern Hellenistic cups.

Such vessels were considered great luxury items and would be part of the treasure of a temple and therefore serve for libations or belong to wealthy individuals, even to senior officials who would used them as gifts between peers; whilst other examples were probably intended for a funerary context.

## CONDITION

The piece is intact: on the inside, it is partially covered with black oxidation, while some encrustations remain on the outside, near the rim. The tondo (on which traces of hammering are visible) might have been filled with an inlaid element.

## PROVENANCE

Ex-British Private Collection; private European collection; acquired on the Swiss Art Market in 1993.

## PUBLISHED

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For the treasures acquired by the Paul Getty Museum, see:
PFROMMER M., *Metalwork from the Hellenized East: Catalogue of the Collections*, Malibu, 1993, pp. 21ff. and pp. 116ff.
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*Christie's*, London, 5 juillet 1995, p. 88, n. 181 (silver cup).
GUILLAUME O., *Fouilles d'Aï Khanoum, vol. II, Les propylées de la rue principale*, Paris, 1983, p. 36, pl. 26).

# BOWL WITH ACANTHUS LEAVES AND ANIMALS

Hellenistic, late 3rd - 2nd century B.C.
Gilded silver
D: 15.3 cm

The piece is excellent condition. The gilding is in an excellent state of preservation, the acanthus leaves incised near the center are blackened. Traces of black oxidation partially cover the edge of the cup.

This extraordinary vessel was cast in a mold, while a large part of the decoration and final additions were cold-worked after casting (carvings, engravings, incisions); the elements in very high relief were made separately and soldered. The decorated zone is covered with thin gilding that perfectly adheres to the silver surface. The thickness of the silver is important and, when lifting the cup, one is surprised by its impressive weight.

The bowl is hemispherical and deep, with a slightly flared edge and a rounded lip; there are neither handles nor stem, nor foot, but the bottom of the vessel presents a beautiful six-petaled rosette carved in relief. The interior metal is perfectly smooth.

The decoration is entirely comprised of the garland, which begins a few centimeters below the edge, and the base. By and large, the artisan followed a perfectly organized scheme, which observes a rigid and clear symmetry; one can nevertheless notice a nice touch of fantasy, thanks to the presence of the animals (a fox or a wolf, birds with spread or closed wings) incised on top of the decorated zone, just below the garland. The rest of the decoration is only based upon the vegetal kingdom.

The composition is arranged into three wreaths of different types (especially acanthus leaves, the so-called "Seleucid", with rounded edges), which spring from the central rosette and form a star. The surface of the leaves, whose contours are in relief, is decorated with vertical ribs and grooves (acanthus) or with half-circles resembling bird's feathers. A splendid and rare detail - even for related silver cups - consists in the large acanthus leaves three-dimensional tip, completely detached from the container's surface. Between the largest leaves, stems with circular flowers (rosettes), spirals and engraved small dots complement the decoration.

Although these patterns can originally be found in the Near Eastern world, their arrangement and style are typically Greek. Besides the acanthus is the basic element of the so-called Corinthian architectural order, since it adorns the lower part of its capital.

This shape (which also existed in gilded or mosaic glass) is similar to one of the most distinct classes of Hellenistic pottery, namely the so-called Megaran bowls: their decorative design has the same structure, with various vegetal motifs springing from a central rosette. This shape, especially attested to by silver examples, is of course very rarely made of metal; its pattern may be simply incised, in light relief, or, like here, in very high, almost modeled relief.

The convention of decorating metal vessels with vegetal elements that are three-dimensionally modeled is documented during the Hellenistic period also for lower and wider cups (the *phialai*), whose central medallion is totally detached from the interior (examples on display in the Metropolitan Museum, New York). Furthermore, there are other container forms whose iconography is based essentially on rosettes and chalices of acanthus leaves and water lilies (cups, jugs, alabasters).

Among the related silver cups still preserved, one should mention in particular the three examples of Civita Castellana (Naples, Museo Nazionale), which are thought to have been manufactured in Pergamon or by a Seleucid workshop (Syria), the bowls of Munich and Toledo, produced perhaps in Egypt (Fayoum) and the pieces of the Nihavend treasure (in present-day Iran).

These bowls were drinking vessels, which were part of what Romans will later call the *argentum potorium*, that is to say the dinnerware used at the most important banquets. Similar bowls may probably have served to make libations.

We know, by Latin authors (Pliny, Plutarch, Cicero, etc.), that there has been a real passion for silver tableware among the wealthy and noble Romans, especially from the late Republican period on. Actually, in the 2nd century B.C., after the first victories against cities from Greece and Asia Minor, and mostly following the donation of Attalus III, King of Pergamon (in 133, he bequeathed his kingdom to the Roman people), significant testimonies of Greek and Oriental toreutics - now almost totally lost, except for a few exceptions - were transported to Rome, where members of the wealthier families could acquire them at auctions organized on these occasions.

The three aforementioned cups, which were primarily part of an important treasure discovered in Civita Castellana in the 19th century, arrived perhaps in Italy during the 2nd century B.C. as Asian war loot, or after the donation of Attalus III (the rest of the treasure has been dispersed and melted after its discovery)

## CONDITION

The piece is in excellent condition. The gilding is in an excellent state of preservation, the acanthus leaves incised near the center are blackened. Traces of black oxidation partially cover the edge of the cup.

## PROVENANCE

Ex-Swiss private collection; American collection, New York.

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MERTENS J.R. (ed.), *The Metropolitan Museum of Art: Greece and Rome*, New York, 1987, p. 80.
Hellenistic glass bowls:
TAIT H., *Five Thousand Years of Glass*, London, 1991, pp. 47ff.
On Megaran bowls and silverware, see:
L. BYVANK-QUARLES VAN UFFORD, *Les bols mégariens: la chronologie et les rapports avec l'argenterie hellénistique*, in *Bulletin Antieke Beschaving*, 1953, pp. 1-20.

# HEAD OF A QUEEN OR A GODDESS

Early Hellenistic Greek, early 3rd century B.C.
Marble
H: 34.2 cm

A harmonious classical appearance and excellent workmanship define this head. It obviously belonged to a statue slightly larger than life-size. It is not clear, however, whether the lower part of the veil, the locks and neck, now fragmentary, constituted the shape prepared to socket into the cavity on the upper part of the figure carved separately and, probably, from a different kind of marble (similar, for instance, to the Demeter statue from Knidos, circa 350 B.C., housed in the British Museum), or whether the head and the figure were carved from a single block of marble. The head faces slightly downward and to the right, which may correspond to either a seated or a standing figure.

The iconographic exploration of the piece is both intriguing and instructive. The wavy hair parts in the middle and is dressed over the temples, a typical Praxitelean hairstyle, as indicated by the details of the "Knidian coiffure": thin locks arranged in multiple shallow or deep grooves and forming a triangular shape of the forehead. Long spiral locks falling behind the ears and over the long neck. At the top of the forehead, the hair is encircled by a fillet. Such long wavy hair with spiral locks is a characteristic of both female and male hairstyles in the representations of the kings, queens or deities in Late Classical Greek art or early Hellenism. The young Apollo and Dionysus are depicted in this effeminate style in vase painting and in sculpture. The fillet was often used in a man's hair. Dionysus is known wearing a narrow headband, called mitra, which crosses his forehead below the hairline. The fillet could be the badge of victory worn by an athlete (see the statue of Diadumenos, athlete tying a ribbon around his head, created by Polykleitos, ca. 440 B.C.) or by a warrior (see one of the two famous Riace Warriors). Or it could be a royal diadem; Alexander the Great wore a diadem consisting of a white ribbon (Lucian, Dialogues of the Dead, 13.4).
The young face is narrow, with a prominent chin, a high forehead, large eyes, a broad nasal bridge, a straight nose and full lips, features that are found in both female and male sculptural representations of the Classical and Late Classical periods. The head with long hair of the figure of Dionysus from the west pediment of the Temple of Apollo in Delphi, circa 335-327 B.C. (Delphi Archaeological Museum), and the head of Dionysus said to have been found near the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates in Athens, circa 325 B.C. (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), both look feminine; their features are similar to the present head. Here, there is one specific trait of the anatomy, the so-called Venus rings on the long and plump neck, which must be recognized; along with the veil, this makes the definition of the head as female unquestionable.

The veil in a Greek woman's dress was most often appropriate for a matron; it became a symbol of her chastity and modesty. Appearance in public required the long cloak (himation) to be pulled up to cover the back of her head. The representation of the bowed, veiled head and the hand holding the edge of the cloak on a marble grave stele is perceived as a sign of grief and mourning. It might seem that the full lips slightly parted and the large eyes deeply set create a somewhat sorrowful expression here; however, this may not be part of the initial concept. The eyes are deeply set at their inner canthi, while the mid-section of each eye globe is wide and flat, as if it was prepared for painted irises and pupils; in this case, the glance would be more directed, and thus the external expression would be less solemn, and more calm and pleasant. If the marble was indeed painted, which is mostly certain for the sculptures of this period, the headband was decorated as well; the plain middle surface would be decorated with flowers, leaves and tendrils. It would be interesting to explore whether the shape of the band with convex upper and lower edges was intended to reproduce either the fabric fillet with stitching and embroidery or rather a metal circlet made in repoussé (edges) and openwork (decoration). The Hellenistic epigram To Aphrodite (Nossis, Greek Anthology, 6.275) refers to such beautiful and attractive things: "I think that Aphrodite will be happy to receive as an offering this band from Simaetha's hair, since it is intricate and smells sweetly of the nectar that Aphrodite herself uses to anoint fair Adonis".

The interpretation of this work remains open: given its artistic qualities and its dimensions, larger than life-size, this head certainly represented a towering figure and would have belonged to an important sculptural group (cult statue, commemorative or funerary monument): she was either a goddess (Demeter, Hera, Aphrodite or one of the Horae, the personifications of the seasons, who each appear in a veil) or a princess, or a queen of one of the Hellenistic kingdoms of the early 3rd century B.C.

The comparison with the portraits of queens or princesses of the Graeco-Egyptian Ptolemaic dynasty (the family that ruled Egypt after the death of Alexander, until the arrival of the Romans) seems very relevant: the heads of the two most influential women of this dynasty (Arsinoe II and Berenice II) in fact have much in common typological and stylistic examination with our example, even if an identification with one of them (rather Arsinoe II) seems premature and would require a more detailed study.

## CONDITION

Slightly damaged surface: tip of the nose, part of the left eyelid, part of the hair above the ears; minor chips on the veil and on the face (right eyelid, cheeks, lower lip, chin).

## PROVENANCE

Ex-private collection, Miami, USA; ex-private collection, South America, 1961.

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